

## The Research of the “Courage to Continue” Using Narrative and Ideographic Approaches

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**Introduction.** Human life is not a straight rising up line. It represents a curved line that resembles a cardiogram, which reflects recessions and upsurge, normative (age, family, professional, social) and abnormal crises, in the form of complex / difficult / extreme situations. What kind of strength / strengths, individual personality traits, mental states, social environment make a person adapt / not adapt, stand / fall, resist / break, find / lose themselves in difficult situations and save / lose their mental health?

**Purpose** is: to study the experience of living-through a hard life situation from the position of the inner world of the personality.

**Methodology / Approach.** In modern psychological science, studies in which an individual who is experiencing a difficult situation from the position of his own inner world is analyzed, appear. According to this tendency and the idea of research, we used ideographic and narrative approaches. The examinee who is going through a serious non-normative life situation made up a personal story in the form of a metaphorical narrative description. According to M.L. Crossley, while analyzing narratives we focused on: identifying important concepts, tone of narrative, images, key event, future scenarios and personal ideology, as the most comprehensive characteristics of personal narrative in adulthood (Crossley, 2009).

**Results.** As a result of the empirical study, we refused to use the known definitions of a difficult life situation, but offered the author's term “Crash stage”. By which we mean the objective non-normative stage in the life path in which a person loses relative stability, realizes the destruction of life in the present, irrevocability to the past and uncertainty of the future. “Crash-stage” is not just a stressful / difficult situation, it is a kind of traumatic stress that does not overload the adaptive possibilities, but concentrates and strains them. There are pre-stage, “crash-point”, post-stage and result-stage in the “crash-stage”. Each stage has its own dynamics and features of living. The result-stage involves several options for functioning: 1) preserving / maintaining self-identity or “the courage to continue” (Sir W. Churchill); 2) false support with a negative result (for example, the emotional stages proposed by E. Kubler-Ross (negation, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance); 3) destructive (use of tranquilizers, alcohol, drugs, suicidal behavior). Person as a self-organizing system in the “crash-stage” undergoes changes with the result according to which his further personal life history develops. To the “crash stage” we refer the following situations: severe illness, disability, the collapse of a career and/or business, reputation and status, disruption of life goals and loss of meaning, disruption of work capacity and social relations.

Analysis of the personal history of the “crash-stage” living-through made it possible to single out the following stages of the living-through: pre-stage – “Fortress”, “crash-point” – “Sudden attack”; post-stage “Siege”, “Siege continues with enemy raids”, “Reconstruction under siege” and incomplete result-stage, as well as important concepts in accordance with the above criteria adopted for narratives. Thus, the proposed history allows us to conclude that the tone of personal narrative is generally optimistic. This is transmitted in the content of history and through the form (“The sun is always above the fortress”, “The sky becomes blue and the sun begins to shine”). The images used by the examinee indicate that he reflects his / her personality traits / personal features (“able-bodied, energetic, confident in the future, positive, friendly, hospitable”, “established work and order”, “answers to the enemy”, “not to fall in the spirit”). According to our observations, the examinee is energetic, competent, self-confident, persistent, with high activity in the performance, sociable, benevolent, he/she has a conviction in his own high level of “human strength”, incontinence, straightforwardness, inner freedom, social courage, stress-resistance, high level of vitality, optimism and motivation for success, the type of temperament mixed – choleric-sanguine. The key event for the examinee was “Crash-point”, an event, which the examinee calls “Sudden attack”, that changed the life of the examinee, his temporal perspective and the surrounding people. However, even in this situation, the examinee presents himself (self-presentation) in the course of the narrative, as a resilient, aware of his actions, a confident person, waiting for help from outside (“Dirty from the fires of the face and body of the defenders, clear movements, that the fortress sustains such a siege for the first time. There is no panic. The fortress did not fall, but it was badly damaged”). The subject describes the perceived behavior of others and the violation of social contacts (“The environment is shocked by what is happening and do not know whether it is possible to visit the fortress. choose a wait-and-see strategy of behavior”). At the post-stages of the “crash-stage”, the examinee transmits his experiences, which testify to the expressed dissociation of the components of viability: an acute sense of himself outside of life, a weak influence on the results of stressful changes, insignificant activity (control), non-acceptance of risk, with medium openness environment and society (challenge). He significantly reduced self-esteem and level of optimism, there is a

deterioration in the emotional state (“The mood of residents varies from optimistic to pessimistic and vice versa: their resources are depleted, but they are active as much as possible”). The examinee is aware of the minimality of emotional social support, given its high value. There is a belief in support from outside. There is a motivation to “stand up” under the influence of a psychological abuse, reflecting the personal ideology of the examinee: “do not give up under any circumstances.” The scenario of the examinee’s future is aimed at restoration, without a clear attach to the future time perspective. According to the story of the examinee, the “crash stage” has not ended, but there is a possibility that the result-stage will end with the self-identity preserving / maintaining (“The Fortress starts reconstruction on its own.”) Develops a new strategy and tactics”.

**Limitations and strengths of the study.** We refer to the use of ideographic and narrative approaches as to the strengths of the research that allow to study the specific experiences of a person in a hard life situation from the perspective of his/her inner world.

**Practical / Social value** is: establishment of the components of the functioning of the human system in the experience of living-through a hard life situation with the goal of creating a rehabilitation program. The program is aimed at maintaining and restoring the resources of an individual experiencing the hard life situation.

**Originality/Conclusions.** Thus, we believe that the process of living the “crash-stage” with the self-identity preserving / maintaining is influenced not only by the level of development of the individual psychological and personality characteristics of the individual and its activity. Rather, it is about synergy of functioning components of the human system “wounded, but not defeated” in the direction of obtaining a useful result. The examinee’s system includes individual and typological and personality traits (temperament type, vitality, optimism), motivation, intellect, will, resources, reflection, self-esteem, experience, life scenario, social environment (family), self-regulation, the concept of human strength as the ability to withstand whatever adversity, resilience, etc. In further studies, it is planned to study changes in the time horizon and the features of social support during the “crash-stage” living-through.

**Keywords:** mental health self-regulation psychology.

#### **References.**

Michele L. Crossley. (2009). Introducing narrative psychology. Philadelphia: Open University Press.